



News Release

U.S. Representative Chris Chocola

Second District, Indiana

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On the Web: <http://Chocola.house.gov>

Contact: Rob Vernon
Office: 202-225-3915
Cell: 202-225-1326

Chocola Offers His Plan to Pay for Hurricane Relief

Joins House colleagues in focusing on fiscal responsibility; outlines plan to achieve that goal

WASHINGTON, DC –At a press conference held today, U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola (R-Ind.) was joined by more than twenty of his House colleagues to call on Congress to reprioritize its spending and find a way to “offset” federal spending on Hurricane Katrina relief efforts with savings from the Federal budget. At that press conference, Chocola offered his plan on how Congress can pay for Hurricane Katrina relief efforts by calling for additional budget savings.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Congress has appropriated an unprecedented \$61.8 billion in disaster and reconstruction aid as part of two emergency supplemental spending bills. If Congress does not act to offset the spending, the cost will be added to our national debt. While each of the Members laid out their plans to offset parts of the spending, Chocola’s plan is the only comprehensive plan that would offset the entire cost to date of Hurricane Katrina spending.

Under the budget agreement passed earlier this year, congressional committees were required to find a minimum of \$35 billion in savings within mandatory spending programs over the next five years and make those recommendations to Congress by September 16, 2005. That date has been pushed back due to Katrina. Chocola’s plan sets a goal of achieving savings in mandatory spending of at least \$100 billion.

“My heart goes out to all those who have been impacted by Katrina, and Congress must do everything we can to ensure that Gulf Coast communities have the resources necessary to rebuild,” said Chocola. “Having said that, I believe we must not compound the natural disaster of Katrina by creating a fiscal disaster in Congress – it is our duty to ensure that we reign in other government spending in any event, and especially in this time of national emergency.”

Currently, mandatory spending by the federal government is slated to grow at a rate of 5.7 percent annually over the next five years. Under Chocola’s plan, mandatory spending would be held to a growth rate of 5.4 percent annually.

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“This is not an unprecedented idea,” said Chocola. “In 1990, Congress found \$92 billion in reconciliation savings. In 1993, we found \$71 billion, and in 1997, we found \$107 billion. So setting a goal of \$100 billion is very practical. This is not a cut. It is simply slowing the growth of government over the next five years by three-tenths of one percent. I think it is a very achievable and practical idea.”

At the press conference held outside the Cannon House Office Building, the group of Congressmen stood united in their determination to figure out ways to cover the costs associated with Katrina, and many of them gave ideas of how to achieve savings. One proposal was to delay the implementation of the Medicare prescription drug benefit by one year.

“I applaud my colleagues for coming together in this effort to propose ideas for paying for the costs associated with Hurricane Katrina,” said Chocola. “However, I do not support delaying the implementation of the Medicare prescription drug benefit.”

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